Planning and Development Committee

MEETING MINUTES

Friday, March 29, 2019

10:30 AM in Room 2D of the LOB

The meeting was called to order at 10:39 AM by Chairman, Sen. Cassano S. S04.

The following committee members were present:

Senators: Cassano S. S04; Champagne D. S35; Cohen C. S12; Fonfara J. S01; Somers H. S18

Representatives: Arnone T. 058; Baker A. 124; Carney D. 023; Conley C. 040; Delnicki T. 014; Dubitsky D. 047; France M. 042; Gucker K. 138; Haines I. 034; Hall J. 007; Kokoruda N. 101; McCarthy Vahey C. 133; Michel D. 146; Rojas J. 009; Stafstrom S. 129; Zawistowski T. 061

Absent were:

Senators: Bradley D. S23

Representatives: D'Agostino M. 091

Sen. Cassano Convened the meeting, read the emergency procedures, and announced a brief recess at 10:40 AM.

At 10:56 AM Sen. Cassano called an end to the recess and made some comments on the Committee’s Session up to that point, saying that he didn’t do as much as he felt he could, referencing the physical impairment he had been managing, but complimenting his Co-Chair Representative McCarthy Vahey’s work. He then turned the meeting over to Rep. McCarthy Vahey, who asked if their House Ranking Member Rep. Zawistowski had any comments. Rep. Zawistowski only briefly commented that they get at the items on the agenda.
Rep. McCarthy Vahey moved on to Section III on the agenda, Bills for Review. Items 1 and 2, S.B. No. 521 (COMM) AN ACT CONCERNING MIDDLETOWN AREA TRANSIT and S.B. No. 526 (COMM) AN ACT REQUIRING A STUDY CONCERNING THE CREATION OF A MUNICIPAL OPTION TO AMEND THE MUNICIPAL FISCAL YEAR TO ALIGN WITH THE FEDERAL FISCAL YEAR, were added to the Consent Calendar.

Rep. McCarthy Vahey then entertained a motion for Final Action, Joint Favorable Substitute on item 3, Substitute for S.B. No. 548 (COMM) AN ACT CONCERNING COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT AND NEIGHBORHOOD ASSISTANCE, which was made by Rep. Arnone and seconded by Rep. Gucker. Rep. Stafstrom commented to ask why this bill is tied to municipal revenue sharing. Rep. Baker commented to say that he was concerned when he first read the bill and would like to enhance the bill as it moves forward, but would be supporting it out of committee. A roll call vote was then held. Present and voting nay was Rep. Hall, with all others who were present voting yea.

Rep. McCarthy Vahey then entertained a motion for Final Action, Joint Favorable on item 4, S.B. No. 556 (COMM) AN ACT CONCERNING ADDITIONAL COMPENSATION FOR CERTAIN RETIRED PUBLIC SAFETY EMPLOYEES, which was made by Rep. Delnicki and seconded by Rep. Zawistowski. Rep. Dubitski commented that he was concerned this bill would separate volunteer and paid employees and create a two tiered system, and he would not be supporting it. A roll call vote was then held. Those present voting nay were Reps. Dubitsky, France, and Haines with all others who were present voting yea.

At this point Rep. McCarthy Vahey announced that the votes would be held open until 3PM

Rep. McCarthy Vahey then entertained a motion for Final Action, Joint Favorable Substitute on item 6, Substitute for S.B. No. 928 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING THE TAX EXEMPTION FOR REAL PROPERTY USED FOR CERTAIN PURPOSES, which was made by Sen. Cassano and seconded by Rep. Gucker. Rep. Dubitski commented to express disappointment that the bill had been completely changed, even though the new bill did not seem to him to be particularly damaging. A roll call vote was then held. Those present voting nay were Sen. Champagne and Reps. Dubitsky and France with all others who were present voting yea.

Rep. McCarthy Vahey then moved on to item 7, Substitute for S.B. No. 1010 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING THE DISCLOSURE OF DAMS AND SIMILAR STRUCTURES BY OWNERS OF REAL PROPERTY, which was added to the Consent Calendar.

Rep. McCarthy Vahey then entertained a motion for Final Action, Joint Favorable Substitute on item 8, Substitute for S.B. No. 1070 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING ABANDONED AND BLIGHTED PROPERTY STEWARDSHIP, which was made by Rep. Zawistowski and seconded by Rep. Arnone. Michael Tellerico of the Legislative Commissioners’ Office (LCO) commented to clarify the LCO number of the substitute bill and Rep. McCarthy Vahey confirmed. A roll call vote was then held with all present voting yea.

Rep. McCarthy Vahey then moved on to item 9, S.B. No. 1071 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING AGING IN PLACE INCENTIVES, which was added to the Consent Calendar.

Rep. McCarthy Vahey then entertained a motion for Final Action, Joint Favorable Substitute on item 5, Substitute for S.B. No. 882 AN ACT CONCERNING MUNICIPAL ARBITRATION AND THE MUNICIPAL EMPLOYEES’ RETIREMENT SYSTEM, which was made by
Rep. Gucker and seconded by Sen. Cassano. Rep. Arnone recused himself from the vote and left the room until the next item due to his own municipal pension. Rep. Zawistowski commented that she was disappointed that the substitute language had arrived from the governor at the last minute, but it was as it had been presented to them. Rep. Delnicki commented that he would vote nay to flag the bill for himself for the future. Rep. Gucker commented that he had concerns but knows that it’s a work in progress. Rep. McCarthy Vahey commented that the only change to the language was from a 2% increase per year to a 1% increase per year. A roll call vote was then held. Those present voting nay were Reps. Delnicki and Hall.

Rep. McCarthy Vahey then entertained a motion for Final Action, Joint Favorable on item 10, S.B. No. 1072 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING THE CONNECTICUT ADVISORY COMMISSION ON INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS, which was made by Sen. Cassano and seconded by Rep. Zawistowski. Sen. Cassano commented that a few years ago there was a motion to eliminate this Commission entirely and this bill shows how far we’ve come. A roll call vote was then held with all present voting yea.

Rep. McCarthy Vahey then moved on to item 12, Substitute for S.B. No. 1077 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING MUNICIPAL SHARED SERVICES FOR ANIMAL CONTROL, which was added to the Consent Calendar.

Rep. McCarthy Vahey then entertained a motion for Final Action, Joint Favorable on item 13, S.B. No. 1082 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING THE CONSOLIDATION OF PUBLIC SAFETY ANSWERING POINTS, which was made by Sen. Cassano and seconded by Rep. Arnone. Rep. McCarthy Vahey commented to point out that they were voting on the original language and that this was a work in progress. Sen. Cassano commented that he met with a group the day before in Waterbury and that this is a contentious issue due to philosophical differences between towns, but Waterbury is a good model with its group of rural towns. Rep. Zawistowski commented that she doesn’t support the original language but would support it out of committee to keep it alive as a vehicle. A roll call vote was then held with all present voting yea.

Rep. McCarthy Vahey then entertained a motion for Final Action, Joint Favorable Substitute on item 14, Substitute for H.B. No. 5123 (COMM) AN ACT PROHIBITING THE USE OF EMINENT DOMAIN FOR CERTAIN COMMERCIAL PURPOSES, which was made by Rep. Arnone and seconded by Rep. Zawistowski. Rep. Stafstrom commented that the substitute language compounds his concerns with the bill, limits eminent domain, prevents redevelopment, and can’t be used for abandoned & blighted property. Rep. Zawistowski commented that she was willing to work with concerned parties. Rep. Stafstrom gave an example of an abandoned factory which would be prevented from being converted into usable residential and commercial spaces. Rep. Zawistowski said that this example may fall under blighted property, but she was not sure. Rep. Stafstrom stated that he would be voting no as this bill would set a dangerous precedent. Rep. Baker commented that he was not a fan of the bill but recognized that different towns have different needs and they can continue to work on the bill. Sen. Cassano commented on highways and how eminent domain is necessary for public safety. Rep. Zawistowski stated that this bill wouldn’t effect public works like highways. Rep. Dubitsky commented that he had similar concerns to Rep. Stafstrom about redevelopment, but there are other avenues for blighted and abandoned property, and he wants this bill to focus on property that people still want. Sen. Cassano stated that there are projects which are quasi-public. Finally Rep. McCarthy Vahey spoke about how the house she was born in was taken by eminent domain, and she has concerns
about the bill but will still support it out of committee. A roll call vote was then held. Those present voting nay were Sens. Cassano and Fonfara and Reps. Rojas, Stafstrom, Michel, and Hall, with all others present voting yea.

Rep. McCarthy Vahey then moved on to item 15, **H.B. No. 5642 (COMM) AN ACT ESTABLISHING A TASK FORCE TO EXAMINE A STATE FUNDING AND SERVICE DISPARITY IN NORTHEASTERN CONNECTICUT**, which was added to the Consent Calendar.

Rep. McCarthy Vahey then entertained a motion for Final Action, Joint Favorable on item 16, **H.B. No. 5644 (COMM) AN ACT CONCERNING THE DEPRECIATION SCHEDULE FOR COMMERCIAL CONSTRUCTION EQUIPMENT**, which was made by Rep. Gucker and seconded by Rep. Arnone. Rep. Haines gave a brief summary of the intent of the bill which is to treat depreciation of construction equipment the same as equipment for other businesses such as farming. A roll call vote was then held. Present and voting nay was Rep. Hall, with all others present voting yea.

Rep. McCarthy Vahey then moved on to item 17, **H.B. No. 6120 (COMM) AN ACT CONCERNING THE FAILURE TO FILE FOR CERTAIN GRAND LIST EXEMPTIONS AND THE RENEWAL OF CERTAIN TEMPORARY NOTES ISSUED BY A MUNICIPALITY**, which was added to the Consent Calendar.

Rep. McCarthy Vahey then entertained a motion for Final Action, Joint Favorable on item 18, **H.B. No. 6292 (COMM) AN ACT CONCERNING MOTOR VEHICLE TAX ASSESSMENTS FOR CERTAIN OWNERS OF RENTAL PROPERTY (HSG,PD)**, which was made by Rep. Zawistowski and seconded by Rep. Gucker. Rep. Zawistowski gave a brief background of the subject of the bill, which is landlords being fined for unregistered cars which are on their property but they do not own, saying the inspiration for the bill was in Waterbury but the problem may be elsewhere as well. A roll call vote was then held. Present and voting nay were Sens. Cassano and Champagne and Rep. Hall, with all others present voting yea.

Rep. McCarthy Vahey then moved on to item 20, **H.B. No. 6564 (COMM) AN ACT ESTABLISHING A TASK FORCE TO STUDY THE TIMING OF THE ADOPTION OF THE STATE BUDGET AND THE EFFECT OF SUCH TIMING ON MUNICIPAL BUDGET PREPARATIONS**, which was added to the Consent Calendar.

Rep. McCarthy Vahey then entertained a motion for Final Action, Joint Favorable on item 21, **H.B. No. 6566 (COMM) AN ACT PROHIBITING MUNICIPAL EMPLOYEES FROM SERVING ON CERTAIN MUNICIPAL LEGISLATIVE BODIES**, which was made by Rep. Stafstrom and seconded by Sen. Cassano. A roll call vote was then held. Present and voting nay were Sen. Champagne and Reps. Arnone, Michel, Delnicki, and Hall, with all others present voting yea.

Rep. McCarthy Vahey then moved on to item 22, **H.B. No. 6747 (COMM) AN ACT AMENDING THE CHARTER OF THE GROVE BEACH POINT ASSOCIATION**, which was added to the Consent Calendar.

Rep. McCarthy Vahey then entertained a motion for Final Action, Joint Favorable Substitute on item 23, **Substitute for H.B. No. 7192 AN ACT CONCERNING MUNICIPAL AND REGIONAL OPPORTUNITIES AND EFFICIENCIES**, which was made by Rep. Gucker and seconded by Rep. Rojas. Rep. Zawistowski pointed out that many sections of the bill had been stripped out in substitute language, and stated that she would be voting no to flag the bill. Sen. Champagne commented that he liked some parts of the bill was a no
overall. Rep. Delnicki said he was against certain parts of the bill and pointed out that they had just been given the substitute language minutes earlier. Rep. McCarthy Vahey explained which parts had been stripped out in the substitute language and added that there had also been some light grammar changes and characterized the bill as a work in progress. Rep. Gucker stated he would be supporting to keep the bill moving it see where it was further down the road. A roll call vote was then held. Present and voting nay were Sens. Champagne and Somers and Reps. Zawistowski, Dubitsky, France, Carney, Haines, Delnicki and Kokoruda, with all others present voting yea.

Rep. McCarthy Vahey then entertained a motion for Final Action, Joint Favorable Substitute on item 24, Substitute for H.B. No. 7206 (RAISED) AN ACT EXPANDING THE PROPERTY TAX EXEMPTION FOR CERTAIN RENEWABLE ENERGY SOURCES AND HYDROPOWER FACILITIES, which was made by Sen. Cassano and seconded by Rep. Delnicki. Rep. McCarthy Vahey noted that the bill clarifies more than establishes. A roll call vote was then held. Present and voting nay were Sen. Somers and Reps. Zawistowski, Dubitsky, France, Carney, Haines, Delnicki and Kokoruda, with all others present voting yea.

Rep. McCarthy Vahey then entertained a motion for Final Action, Joint Favorable on item 25, H.B. No. 7209 (RAISED) AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE CONNECTICUT MUNICIPAL REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY, which was made by Sen. Cassano and seconded by Rep. Gucker. Rep. McCarthy Vahey commented that there would be a lot more conversation to come on this bill in the future. Rep. Zawistowski said that even though the bill was a work in progress she still had concerns, including adding another layer of authority to deal with, and would be flagging. Rep. Dubitsky stated that he had serious concerns about how this will effect distressed municipalities and that transit oriented development is scary for people in his area. Rep. McCarthy Vahey said that that language raises questions and will be an ongoing conversation. Rep. Zawistowski replied that they would need to work through issues on that specific part. A roll call vote was then held. Present and voting nay were Sens. Champagne and Somers and Reps. Zawistowski, Dubitsky, France, Carney, Haines, Delnicki and Kokoruda, with all others present voting yea.

Rep. McCarthy Vahey then entertained a motion for Final Action, Joint Favorable on item 26, H.B. No. 7275 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING BOARD OF EDUCATION VACANCIES, which was made by Sen. Cassano and seconded by Rep. Arnone. Rep. McCarthy Vahey noted there had been two bills on this and asked if there was any further discussion. Seeing none, a roll call vote was then held. Present and voting nay were Reps. Dubitsky, France, Carney, Haines, and Kokoruda, with all others present voting yea.

Rep. McCarthy Vahey then moved on to item 27, Substitute for H.B. No. 7361 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING THE ADOPTION OF MASTER PLANS BY TAX INCREMENT DISTRICTS, which was added to the Consent Calendar.

Rep. McCarthy Vahey then entertained a motion for Final Action, Joint Favorable on item 28, H.B. No. 7362 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING ZONING, which was made by Rep. Zawistowski and seconded by Rep. Delnicki. Rep. McCarthy Vahey stated that she had concerns with the bill and that communities have issues with large scale installations such as cell towers. Rep. Dubitsky commented that there seems to be a push for large facilities in unexpected places. He said that while the Citing Council is probably good at what they do, more local input would be better. Rep. Delnicki stated that there is no public hearing process on these installations. Sen. Cassano commented that this is too
far-reaching and he doesn’t want to see historic Connecticut ruined. Rep. Arnone expressed that he has had a different experience, that installations worked with families and farm owners, and that these installations can lower dependence on foreign oil and give equally to Open Space. Rep. Delnicki commented on Sen. Cassano’s concerns, saying that this bill would actually help protect historic lands with a hearing process. Rep. Dubitsky said that there should be balance between competing interests, but on this subject towns have no input, and he wants farm communities to share decision making with the Citing Council. Rep. Kokoruda shared an anecdote from Madison in which the town pushed back on a cell tower, residents started negotiating on behalf of their own backyards, and she said that it worked out in the end and that the important that was local involvement. A roll call vote was then held. Present and voting yea were Sens. Champagne and Somers and Reps. Dubitsky, France, Haines, Delnicki and Kokoruda, with all others present voting nay. The motion failed 8-13 with 2 absent.

Rep. McCarthy Vahey then moved on to item 29, H.B. No. 7366 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING INCENTIVES FOR ENERGY-EFFICIENT CONSTRUCTION, which was added to the Consent Calendar.

Rep. McCarthy Vahey then entertained a motion for Final Action, Joint Favorable Substitute on item 30, Substitute for H.B. No. 7367 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING THE USE OF THE PENFIELD REEF LIGHTHOUSE AS A COLUMBARIUM, which was made by Rep. Gucker and seconded by Sen. Cassano. Rep. McCarthy Vahey briefly explained the substitute language. Sen. Cassano joked that in a few years there would be ghost tours of the lighthouse, and Rep. Carney joked that his family will be able to store his remains there. A roll call vote was then held with all present voting yea.

Rep. McCarthy Vahey then moved on to item 31, Substitute for H.B. No. 7368 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING THE USE OF MASS APPRAISAL SOFTWARE, which was added to the Consent Calendar.

Rep. McCarthy Vahey then entertained a motion for Final Actions, Joint Favorable or Joint Favorable Substitute respectively, on the items on the Consent Calendar (see items above for bill nos. and titles): 1, 2, 7, 9, 12, 15, 17, 20, 22, 27, 29, and 31. The motion was made by Rep. Zawistowski and seconded by Sen. Cassano. A roll call vote was then held with all present voting yea.

Rep. McCarthy Vahey gave a reminder that the votes would be held open until 3pm. She then thanked the committee staff, LCO staff Michael Tellerico and Sarah O’Connor, Office of Legislative Research staff Julia Bansal and Jessica Schaeffer-Helmecki, her Co-Chair and Ranking Members, and all those who had testified for their contributions to the session up to that point.

Sen. Cassano added thanks to others who had been involved including lobbyists who had given info, Jonathan Harris from the Office of Policy and Management, anyone who had helped him get around with his current disability, Avery Gaddis from the Senate Republicans Office, Kevin Spinella from the House Democrats Office, and Theresa Govert from the Senate Democrats Office.

Rep. Zawistowski commented that she has now worked with Senator Cassano on this committee for 3 years, enjoyed her first time working with Reps. McCarthy Vahey and Baker and Sen. Champagne, gave special mention to the clerk Camilo Lemos who came to the committee part way through the session, calling the previous clerk Wade Packer a tough act to follow, and thanked Legislative Commissioners’ Office staff.
Sen. Champagne commented on the session as his first time on the committee, noted that even when there were disagreements they worked it out, and thanked support staff.

A motion was duly made and seconded at 12:27PM to recess the meeting until 3PM, at which point it was promptly adjourned.

Edward Waters  Camilo Lemos
Assistant Clerk  Committee Clerk